

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 MADRID 01420 282234Z

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

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INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJ: UNIVERSITY AND STUDENT TURMOIL-MADRID

CATHEDRAL SIT-IN

BEGIN SUMMARY: UNIV SITUATION HAS BEEN GREATLY EXACERBATED BY VALLADOLID UNIV CLOSING THREE WEEKS AGO, WHICH HAS STIMULATED CONTINUING CAMPUS DISORDERS. LATEST INCIDENT WAS A FEB 27 SIT-IN AT MADRID CATHEDRAL WHICH RESULTED IN ARREST 250 STUDENTS (ALTHOUGH MOST WERE SUBSEQUENTLY RELEASED). END SUMMARY

1. EXTENSIVE UNIV STUDENT AGITATION AND TURMOIL DURING CURRENT ACADEMIC YEAR, ALREADY WORST OF RECENT YEARS, HAS INTENSIFIED AND BECOME EVEN MORE EMBITTERED DURING PAST THREE WEEKS, EVER SINCE GOVT IN EARLY FEBRUARY, CLOSED FOR DURATION OF ACADEMIC YEAR MOST OF FACULTIES OF UNIV OF VALLADOLID, THAT DRASTIC ACTION AT VALLADOLID HAS SUBSEQUENTLY RAISED ARE AND PROTEST NOT ONLY OF STUDENTS, BUT OF PARESTS, SHOPKEEPERS, AND OTHERS WHO MAY BE SEVERELY AFFECTED BY THIS CLOSURE OR BY

POSSIBLE OTHERSUCH FUTURE CLOSURES OF UNIVERSITIES IN OTHER CITIES, INASMUCH AS MEASURE WAS CLEARLY A WARNING BY GOVT THAT COMPARABLE ACTIONS MIGHT BE IN STORE FOR OTHER  
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PAGE 02 MADRID 01420 282234Z

UNIV CAMPUSES IF STUDENT AGITATION CONTINUED.

2. GOVT'S CLOSURE OF VALLADOLID, HOWEVER, HAS TO A CERTAIN EXTENT HAD OPPOSITE EFFECT OF THAT INTENDED, AND HAS SPARKED AN EVER GREATER DEGREE OF CAMPUS AGITATION, STUDENT STRIKES, AND INCIDENTS. THUS A LISTING OF UNIVERSITIES AFFECTED BY STRIKES, "DAYS OF STRUGGLE", CLASHES WITH POLICE, POLICE EVICTIONS OF STUDENTS HOLDING ILLEGAL ASSEMBLIES, ETC., DURING PAST THREE WEEKS WOULD INCLUDE MOST OF UNIVERSITIES THROUGHOUT SPAIN, INCLUDING BOTH MADRID UNIVERSITIES, BOTH UNIVERSITIES IN BARCELONA, AND THE UNIVERSITIES OF BILBAO, OVIEDO, MALAGA, AND SALAMANCA, IN ADDITION TO CONTINUING PROTESTS AT VALLADOLID.

3. MEANWHILE RECTORS OF UNIVERSITIES IN MADRID, BARCELONA, SEVILLE, OVIEDO AND SALAMANCA, HAVE ISSUED WARNINGS, UNDER REPORTED INSTRUCTIONS FROM GOVT, THAT, IF CAMPUS DISORDERS DON'T STOP IN NEAR FUTURE, SAME TYPE OF DRASTIC DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS AS AT VALLADOLID, WITH CLOSING OF FACULTIES OR EVEN OF ENTIRE UNIVERSITIES FOR DURATION, MAY BE IN STORE FOR STUDENTS. ALREADY DURING PAST TWO WEEKS SOME UNIV FACULTIES HAVE BEEN CLOSED BY AUTHORITIES FOR SEVERAL-DAY PERIODS, BUT THEN REOPENED.

4. AN INCIDENT ON FEB 27 HAS ONCE AGAIN HIGHLIGHTED CURRENT STUDENT DISORDERS. ON THAT DATE SOME 250 UNIV STUDENTS STAGED A SIT-IN IN MADRID'S CATHEDRAL IN SUPPORT OF DEMANDS FOR (A) REOPENING OF VALLADOLID UNIV; (B) RECOGNITION OF DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS OF ASSEMBLY AND OF EXPRESSION; (C) WITHDRAWAL OF POLICE FROM UNIV CAMPUSES; (D) RECOGNITION BY THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION OF POPULARLY ELECTED STUDENT REPS; AND (3) RESIGNATION OF EDUCATION MINISTER MARTINEZ ESTERUELAS. SIT-IN WAS PROMPTLY AND EFFECTIVELY BROKEN UP BY POLICE, WHO ARRESTED ALL 250 STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN SIT-IN AND HAULED THEM OFF TO POLICE HQS. BY END OF DAY 200 STUDENTS HAD BEEN RELEASED ALTHOUGH OTHER 50 WERE HELD OVERNIGHT AND ARE STILL BEING DETAINED.

5. MADRID CATHEDRAL SIT-IN HAS ALSO IMPINGED UPON SENSITIVE CHURCH/STATE ISSUES. POLICE CLAIM THAT THEY HAD RECEIVED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MADRID 01420 282234Z

AN AUTHORIZATION FROM ACTING ECCLESIASTICAL DIOCESAN AUTHORITIES TO ENTER THE MADRID CATHEDRAL AND DISLODGE AND ARREST STUDENTS; BUT MADRID CARDINAL TARANCON (WHO WAS OUT OF TOWN AT TIME OF SIT-IN) HAS PUBLISHED STATEMENT DENYING THAT EITHER HE OR ANY OF HIS STAFF GRANTED POLICE PERMISSION TO ENTER CATHEDRAL TO DISLODGE STUDENT PROTESTORS, AS REQUIRED UNDER CONCORDAT.

6. COMMENT: THERE APPEARS TO BE GENERAL CONSENSUS, EVEN AMONG REGIME SUPPORTERS AND ESTABLISHMENT FIGURES, THAT GOVT OVER-REACTED WHEN IT CLOSED UNIV OF VALLADOLID FOR DURATION, AND THAT THIS ACTION EXACERBATED UNIV SITUATION, INSTEAD OF INTIMIDATING STUDENTS FROM PROVOKING FURTHER DISORDERS. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER RECTORS, ACTING IN BEHALF OF GOVT, MAY CARRY THROUGH THEIR THREATS TO LIKEWISE CLOSE FOR DURATION OF CURRENT ACADEMIC YEAR SOME OF MORE IMPORTANT AND LARGER UNIVERSITIES. IT IS ALSO SIGNIFICANT THAT IN PRESIDENT ARIAS' FEB 26 SPEECH, HE MADE REPEATED REFERENCES TO GOVT'S DETERMINATION TO MAINTAIN ORDER ON THE CAMPUSES AND ELSEWHERE AT ALL COSTS, AND STATED THAT GOVT HAS NOT ONLY WILL BUT COMPLETE CAPACITY TO DO SO.  
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